

**Testimony of Jaqueline. A. Samuels**  
Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals

Education Committee  
March 12, 2014

***HB 5532 An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Paraprofessional Staffing Levels***

I have been a Para Educator since 2007 in the Hartford School District serving in three different schools. I served as a kindergarten classroom Para and for the last three years as a Support Para to two different students with special needs. During this period of time I have noticed that while Para Educators are told we are a valuable part of this "team" or that we often are used to fill gaps especially where compliance with the Individual Education Plans of students are an issue. Because of these issues, I support HB 5532 and ask you to do the same.

There are children whose parents and interested parties are told that they will be given a Para Educator to help them meet specified goals when in fact these children often go without such assistance on a daily and even yearly basis from what I understand from those who are frustrated with the lack of concern shown to these children in need.

I know Para Educators who have had the experience of being pulled away from their assigned students anywhere from a few hours to a few months to give the appearance that another child in need is "covered" while his/her assigned student is given to another Para who must now do double duty assisting the student plus the student they have been assigned. We work hard to establish relationships and bonds of trust with our students that are unparalleled due to our roles in their lives. The inconsideration of even this with regard to the Para Educators and the students is disgusting.

The fact that we are often not invited to attend or have input in the PPTs (although we work closest with the students throughout each day) and that many of us have not seen our student's IEPs even after working with the children for a few months or more - until we take the initiative to request to see it - are important indications that there needs to be a closer look at what is really taking place and parents above all else need to be kept aware of what is actually happening to their children whom they entrusted to the care of any school.

HB 5523 will create a mechanism that will allow many of these staffing issues to be addressed. I urge you to support it. Thank you for your time, attention, and action.